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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, AT THE 1193rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 July 2018

**In response to the reports by the
Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine,
Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, and the Special Representative of the
OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral
Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Ertuğrul Apakan,

We are pleased to welcome you to this OSCE Permanent Council meeting.

Your assessments of the situation in the country and at the negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk once again confirm that the authorities in Kyiv are deliberately dragging out the settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict. The continuing tension ahead of the elections enables them to address several tasks at once. On the foreign policy front, this means securing blind support from Western countries, while attributing Ukraine's failure to fulfil its own obligations to special "war-like" conditions. On the domestic front, this means playing on the patriotic feelings of the Ukrainians, while at the same time organizing the work of the State structures around the government's own electoral agenda. In Kyiv they are confident that anything can be justified as long as there is "war".

The people of Ukraine have become hostages to the political ambitions of the Ukrainian ruling elite. The Ukrainian Government is attempting to water down the Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by a United Nations Security Council resolution, blocking the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and ignoring the initiatives proposed by the mediators and co-ordinators of the working groups in the military, political, humanitarian and economic areas.

We share the assessments of the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) that the situation at the line of contact has continued to deteriorate over the past three months. Between 1 April and 17 July, the Ukrainian armed forces shelled militia-controlled settlements 64 times, killing seven civilians, wounding 51 and damaging residential buildings. The "harvest ceasefire" has only resulted in a

reduction in violations of the ceasefire regime. The Ukrainian Government is not ready for a complete ceasefire.

The “Combined Forces Operation” runs the risk of a massive escalation at the line of contact. The SMM Chief Monitor confirms in his written report that it was the Ukrainian armed forces who occupied the Zolote disengagement area in April first. This was followed by increased military activity in the disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske. The Ukrainian Government continues to disrupt the disengagement of forces in Stanytsia Luhanska. On 13 July, the SMM reported the latest signal from the militia to start the withdrawal, but the Ukrainian security forces did not respond. Ukrainian armed forces’ military equipment and personnel are capturing ever more areas in the security zone. The Ukrainian troops’ forward positions advanced 300 metres near Vodiane, one kilometre towards the village of Zholobok and took control of Chihari in mid-May. This is a direct violation of the Minsk Package of Measures, which prohibits any offensive action.

According to the SMM, only 17 per cent of the military equipment that was meant to be withdrawn is to be found in the depots of the Ukrainian armed forces. After the entry into force of the “harvest ceasefire”, the monitors discovered a number of multiple-launch rocket systems near Sievierodonetsk (20 Uragan systems) and Poltavka (12 Grad systems).

Against this background, it is quite understandable that the Ukrainian Government is unwilling to implement the additional measures proposed by Ambassador Apakan in the Trilateral Contact Group to de-escalate military tension, namely the disengagement of forces and hardware, the withdrawal of equipment, the publication of orders for a ceasefire and disciplinary procedures for those who violate it. The Ukrainian armed forces will continue describing the shelling of Donbas as “an appropriate response”.

We call on Ambassador Apakan to focus the efforts of the Minsk-based TCG Working Group on Security Issues on the disengagement of forces and the withdrawal of equipment from the line of contact. It is impossible to achieve a ceasefire without this. Despite ceasefires lasting a period of seven days being recorded on numerous occasions in Stanytsia Luhanska by the SMM, the Ukrainian armed forces continue to come up with pretexts for why they cannot fulfil their obligations regarding the disengagement of forces. What does the SMM leadership make of the fact that Ukrainian military equipment has appeared in Petrivske and Zolote from where it had been withdrawn earlier?

We trust that the SMM will monitor more closely and report promptly on any dangerous military preparations by the Ukrainian armed forces. Patrols on both sides of the line of contact must be carried out in a balanced manner, including using long-range unmanned aerial vehicles. These currently cover only the area within a few kilometres of the line of contact on territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces, failing to properly monitor the situation further away.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is clear that a complete ceasefire does not fit in with the Ukrainian Government’s plans. According to the logic of the Ukrainian authorities themselves, this will not allow them to relax the trade and economic blockade of Donbas or begin implementing the political provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures. What we have is a vicious circle that can only be broken by the Ukrainian Government.

The co-ordinator of the TCG Working Group on Political Issues, Pierre Morel, confirmed that Ukraine is unwilling to work in line with the concept of parallel steps endorsed by the Normandy Quartet leaders. The Ukrainian Government is trying to avoid providing political guarantees to Donbas through the implementation of the Steinmeier formula in national legislation. We call on Ambassador Sajdik to persevere in getting the Ukrainian Government to begin practical dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk on political measures for a settlement.

We share the SMM Chief Monitor's assessments that the punitive "Combined Forces Operation" launched in accordance with the law on reintegration has made the already difficult living conditions of the population of south-eastern Ukraine even worse, especially near the line of contact. There are ever more casualties among the civilian population. We continue to insist on a comparative analysis of the conformity of the Ukrainian law on reintegration with the Package of Measures. We believe that this law contravenes the Minsk agreements.

The humanitarian problems in Donbas, which are being created by the Ukrainian Government, need to be dealt with immediately. The SMM has confirmed that civilians have come under fire from the Ukrainian armed forces at the Olenivka crossing point and that elderly people have died while waiting in the lengthy queues at the Ukrainian checkpoint at Stanytsia Luhanska. The Ukrainian negotiators in the Trilateral Contact Group are blocking the adoption of a decision to start repairs to the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, under a project that would enable the passage of ambulances across the bridge. The issue of pensions and social security benefits due to be paid by the Ukrainian Government to people in eastern Ukraine deserves close attention. We urge Ambassador Sajdik to intervene personally in the work of the relevant TCG Working Group.

We welcome the SMM's efforts to facilitate local ceasefires to allow repairs and maintenance work to be carried out. We should like to mention in particular the SMM operation to escort workers at the Donetsk filtration station. It is largely thanks to the SMM's efforts that over 300,000 people in south-eastern Ukraine still have access to clean drinking water. We hope that the protection of civilian infrastructure facilities in Donbas and the threats to environmental security can be addressed in the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk with due regard for the legitimate interests of all the inhabitants of Donbas.

We have taken note of the increased monitoring by the SMM of the situation in central and western Ukraine. Tension is growing in the capital and the regions as the elections approach. Since the events on the Maidan in 2014, radicals of all persuasions have continued to strengthen their political influence and have become actively involved in the battle for power. The Kyiv authorities are not only afraid of reining in the nationalists, but are also actively playing into their hands. As a result, neo-Nazism is on the rise in Ukraine, and crimes motivated by ethnic and religious hatred have become more frequent. The SMM has confirmed that Roma have been attacked, murdered and injured in Kyiv, Lviv and Ternopil, and that radicals have held defiant demonstrations. Nationalists torched nine cars with Hungarian number plates in Zakarpattia. It is no longer possible to hide the scale of the problem of the nationalist excesses. I would remind you that this subject was recently addressed in the 22nd quarterly report of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. International human rights organizations (Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House) appealed to the Minister of the

Interior and to the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. It is strange, to say the least, that the OSCE limits itself merely to reporting the nationalists' crimes. We remind the SMM once again of the importance of preparing without delay a dedicated report on manifestations of radical nationalism, neo-Nazism and racial intolerance in Ukraine.

The repeal of the Ukrainian law on the foundations of the State language policy and the entry into force of the discriminatory law on education deprives the country's Russian-speaking population and other ethnic minorities living in Ukraine of the right to be taught in their native language. This directly contravenes the right of the population of Donbas to linguistic self-determination enshrined in the Minsk Package of Measures. We share the negative assessments of these legislative initiatives that are based on the opinions of the people living in Ukraine. We trust that the SMM will closely monitor developments in Ukraine as regards native-language education and provide regular updates.

Attacks on the Orthodox Church have grown more frequent. Between February and April, the SMM reported attacks on and arson incidents at churches in Kyiv, Odessa and Lviv. There was an attempt to seize a church in Ptycha in April. The Ukrainian Government is deliberately creating a divide in Ukrainian society along religious lines. This further exacerbates the internal Ukrainian conflict.

The situation in Ukraine regarding freedom of speech has become critical. The Ukrainian Government is suppressing the voices of those who try to paint an objective picture of events in Ukraine that is not to the authorities' liking. The editor-in-chief of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains in detention under an absurd pretext. The Ukrainian Security Service searched the RIA Novosti offices, attempted to recruit the Russian journalist Irina Viskovich, did not allow the Russian journalists Yevgeny Primakov and Paula Slier and their British colleague John Warren Graham Broderip into Ukraine and banned them from entering the country for five years, and staged the murder of Arkady Babchenko. Even those who only recently were "heroes of Ukraine" are getting short shrift. Why is no one demanding, as they did not so long ago in this room, the release of Nadiya Savchenko, who is once again on hunger strike? On 18 May, the Ukrainian security forces opened fire on Russian journalists in Donbas yet again. They injured members of the VGTRK camera team, journalist Pavel Vydrin and sound engineer Igor Uklein. Russian news agencies Rossiya Segodnya and RIA Novosti Ukraine were banned from broadcasting for three years. Radicals continue their harassment of members of the press via the Mirotvorets website with the connivance of the authorities. Consideration of a draft law on countering threats to national security in the media space, which proposes the blocking of undesirable information resources without a court ruling, has begun in the Verkhovna Rada. We call on the SMM to monitor on a regular basis freedom of speech, journalists' rights and citizens' access to information.

Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan,

In view of the worsening domestic political situation in Ukraine, the significance of targeted efforts regarding the entire spectrum of issues concerning a Ukrainian settlement is growing. There is a high risk of large-scale opportunistic destabilization in Ukraine, including in the conflict zone. There is a need for balanced monitoring by the SMM on both sides of the line of contact and greater attention to the serious domestic political problems throughout the country. The deadlock in the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk must be overcome. The Ukrainian Government should begin to seek mutually acceptable solutions to problems

through direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. Sabotaging the commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures only makes the prospect of a settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict less likely.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the distinguished Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan for their responsible work and pass on our words of gratitude to the SMM monitors.